

Town of Calais, Vermont

CHARTERED 1781

Town Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, March 6, 2018 at 9:30am at the Calais Elementary School

ARTICLE 1. To elect a Moderator for the ensuing year: The Treasurer presided over the election of a moderator. Denise Wheeler motioned to nominate Gus Seelig. The motion was seconded and unanimously approved.

The Moderator reviewed the rules and best practice for Town Meeting, according to Robert's Rules of Order, and thanked mic runners Sonny Colt and Avery Cochran. The Moderator announced that, without opposition, the order of Articles 19 and 20 would be switched; there was no opposition.

ARTICLE 2. To ask questions about the reports of town boards and officers: Barry Bernstein commented on the town budget, and on the report regarding WEC net metering; John Brabant responded regarding town budget.

ARTICLE 3. To elect the following Town officers from the floor:

Agent to Convey Real Estate: Denise Wheeler nominated Judy Fitch Robert for a 1-year term. Rose Pelchuck seconded. Denise Wheeler moved to close nominations and have the Clerk cast one ballot for Judy Fitch Robert; Clif Emmons seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Law Agent: Denise Wheeler nominated Tina Bielenberg for a 1-year term; Rose Pelchuck seconded. Denise Wheeler moved to close nominations and have the Clerk cast one ballot for Tina Bielenberg; Clif Emmons seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Grand Juror: Denise Wheeler nominated Tina Bielenberg for a 1-year term; Clif Emmons seconded. Denise Wheeler moved to close nominations and have the Clerk cast one ballot for Tina Bielenberg; Rose Pelchuck seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Trustee of Public Funds: Rod Buck nominated Bill Russell for a 3-year term and Denise Wheeler seconded. Denise Wheeler moved to close nominations and have the Clerk cast one ballot for Bill Russell. Motion was seconded by Clif Emmons and carried unanimously.

Cemetery Commissioner: Fletcher Dean nominated Juanita Nunn for a 5-year term; it was seconded. Denise Wheeler motioned to close nominations and have the Clerk cast one ballot for Juanita Nunn. Motion was seconded and carried unanimously.

The Selectboard Chair introduced Sandra Ferver, the soon to be appointed Town Treasurer, thanked retiring Delinquent Tax Collector Nadine Martin, and expressed appreciation for retiring Town Treasurer Donna Fitch. Donna Fitch shared sentiments on her time serving the town.

ARTICLE 4. Shall the voters approve total highway and general fund expenditures of \$1,525,150 of which \$1,224,815 shall be raised by taxes and \$300,335 by non-tax revenue?

Barry Bernstein moved to approve this article, and it was seconded.

Craig Line inquired about the line items for liability insurance, sand, reappraisal fund, salaries, Conservation Fund's move from being an article to be a budget line item. Jack Russell inquired about why the Conservation Fund was doubled, and conversation included the Fund's past projects and current role in Memorial Hall. Larry Bush mentioned the handout on Conservation Commission activity. Art Edelstein and the Selectboard discussed road maintenance, trainings and climate change. Stephanie Kaplan identified the difference between the Conservation Fund and the Conservation Commission and spoke about the river corridor easement on the Pekin that runs through the Armstrong Farm. Barbara McAndrew asked for clarification on the Conservation Fund amounts. Barry Bernstein commented on WEC's perspective on weather and road conditions and his appreciation for working with the Road Commissioner.

The motion was called to question and voted; the article passed.

ARTICLE 5. Shall the voters appropriate \$27,132 for the Kellogg Hubbard Library for its operating expenses?

Craig Line motioned to move article five, it was seconded.

Craig is the Calais Representative on the Kellogg Hubbard Board of Trustees and explained that they are looking for an increase from \$16 to \$17 per household in Calais and compared this to other towns and statewide average. Gail Graham commented on the increasing funding of the Library over previous years. Andrea Serota and Erica Heilman commented in support of the Library as a community resource. Sue Cioffi asked Craig Line to provide information supporting the appropriation, and Craig itemized programs, services, circulation, resources, and membership details. Pat Finnie commented on his dislike of the method of voting to decide on Library funding. Caroline Morton thanked Craig for serving and suggested including the Library item in the budget in the future. Doug Lilley commented on items related to smartphones, library, and resources for battered women.

Doug Lilley moved to reduce the expenditure by \$7,000; the motion was seconded.

Craig Line, Janet Pocorobba, Art Edelstein and Mercedes Pinon added to the vibrant discussion about the library.

A motion to call the question was seconded and carried. The moderator called for a vote on the proposed amendment. The amendment failed.

The original article was motioned for vote, and the article passed.

ARTICLE 6. Shall the voters appropriate \$49,000 for the operation and maintenance of the Town cemeteries?

The article was moved and seconded.

Cemetery Commissioner Fletcher Dean explained that statute requires the budget be separate from the Selectboard budget, and details on the Commission's efforts to bring cemeteries up to standard were shared. Rolf Mueller inquired about and Rod Buck, Trustee of Public Funds, discussed the endowment fund and current strategy. The Town Treasurer added fund goals for the Cemetery Commission and commented personally on the expenses of maintaining the cemeteries compared to in the past and suggested moving to a contracted position for cemetery maintenance. John Simanskas, Cemetery Commissioner, commented on the goal to get cemeteries to a position of requiring mowing only, and updated details on each cemetery in Calais. Stephanie Kaplan commented on the work of the Cemetery Commission in the recent past and improved appearance of the public space. Mary Alice Proffitt added sentiments on cemetery maintenance and supported the suggestion to contract for a lower cost for maintenance. Jan Ohlsson motioned to call the question, was seconded and the vote carried. The Moderator called for a vote on the article. The article passed.

State Representative Janet Ancel addressed the meeting, presenting a State of Vermont Legislative Resolution honoring Donna Fitch for her lifetime and professional accomplishments as retiring Town Clerk and Treasurer of Calais. Representative Ancel updated the meeting with a report of her activities. The Moderator took questions for Rep. Ancel, which included discussions on challenges of dairy farmers and activities of the Agriculture Committee and comments of appreciation for Rep. Ancel's work on Act 68.

ARTICLE 7. Shall the voters appropriate the indicated sums as requested by the following organizations in Calais and the Central Vermont area, as follows:

Calais Community Connections \$1,000; Capstone Community Action \$300; Central Vermont Basic Education \$1,000; Central Vermont Council on Aging \$1,400; Central Vermont Development Corp \$500; Central Vermont Home Health and Hospice \$3,200; Central Vermont Memorial Civic Center \$800; Circle (Formerly Battered Women's Services & Shelter); \$700; Family Center of Washington County \$500; Friends of Winooski River \$300; Good Beginnings of Central Vermont \$300; Green Mountain Transit \$859; Greenup Vermont \$100; Home Share Now \$600; Montpelier Senior Center \$4,300; Old West Church \$100; Peoples Health and Wellness Clinic \$1,500; Sexual Assault Crisis Team \$200; Twin Valley Senior Center \$3,000; Vermont Association for the Blind \$650; Vermont Center for Independent Living; \$415; Washington County Diversion Program \$300; Washington County Youth Service Bureau \$500; Woodbury/Calais Foodshelf \$380; Washington County Mental Health Services \$1,400; TOTAL \$24,304

The Moderator shared that there is no longer a Town committee advising on the details of this article. The article was moved and seconded, and discussion ensued. Rick Winston discussed the increase in funding request for the MSAC, including the increased participation in the past year, and MSAC offerings in addition to classes.

Barry Bergstein moved to increase the VCIL line item from \$415 to \$800; the motion was seconded and passed.

Gail Graham inquired about the number of MSAC participants from Calais. Fletcher Dean shared his perspective from having served on the now-disbanded review committee.

Doug Lilley moved to amend the amount allocated for Circle from \$700 to \$7,000. The amendment was seconded, voted on, and defeated.

Tammy Leno moved to amend the amount for WCYSB from \$500 to \$2000. The motion was seconded. The amendment was voted on and defeated.

Doug Lilley moved to amend the amount for Circle from \$700 to \$4000. The amendment went to a yellow card vote. The amendment passed.

Paul Hannon stated his frustration with voting for amounts without more information on funding requests and proposed reinstating the committee advising on non-profit organizations requesting funding from the Town. Several people volunteered to be on this committee. Scott Robbins commented on non-profit perspectives on the process of applying for town funding; the Treasurer advised how Calais has made it easier for non-profits to apply. Tammy Leno commented on opportunities for seniors within Calais.

The Moderator called for a vote on the original article, with amendments. The article passed.

ARTICLE 8. Shall the voters exempt from taxation real property of the Adamant Cooperative, Inc., for a period of five years, pursuant to 32 V.S.A. §3840?

A motion to pass the article was made, and seconded. Scott Thompson discussed the value of Adamant Coop to the town. A motion to call the question was seconded and carried. The Moderator called for a vote on the article. The article passed.

ARTICLE 9. Shall the voters authorize the Selectboard to borrow an amount not to exceed \$200,000, for a term not to exceed five years, for continued renovation of the Calais Town Hall?

Denise Wheeler moved the article, and it was seconded.

The Selectboard Chair outlined the municipal function of the building, as well as the modern needs for municipal services, year-round meeting space that is up to code, storage, community space, and discussed work done so far and limitations to utilizing the school. Artie Toulis commented on the community use of the space and the due diligence that the committee has exerted in pursuing grants and possibilities. Fees from community groups will generate additional income. Mercedes Pinon, Gail Graham, Rick Kehne and Warner Shedd spoke in support of the article. Betsy Parah inquired about the funding payback. Mack Gardner-Morse asked about effect on the project if a grant is not secured, and committee members and Selectboard discussed applying for more grants and meeting ADA needs. A motion to call the question was seconded and carried. The Moderator called for a vote on the article. The article passed.

ARTICLE 10: Shall the voters authorize payment of property taxes in two equal installments, with the first installment due on or before 4:00 p.m. 30 days after the tax bills are mailed, but not earlier than August 1, 2018, and the second installment due on or before 4:00 p.m. on November 15, 2018?

Denise Wheeler moved to pass this article; it was seconded. The article passed.

ARTICLE 11: Shall each property tax installment payment be made by delivery to the Treasurer by 4:00 p.m. on or before the due date or U.S. Postal Service postmark made on or before the due date?

The Article was moved and seconded, and the article passed.

ARTICLE 12. Shall interest in the amount of 0.5% per month or fraction thereof, be charged from the due date of each property tax installment?

The Article was moved and seconded, and the article passed.

ARTICLE 13: Shall the Town allow a grace period of 14 days after the due date of the second property tax installment payment, during which no delinquent tax penalty shall be charged?

The Article was moved and seconded. Mack Gardner-Morse inquired about the details of the grace period and the Treasurer clarified.

The Article was voted and passed.

ARTICLE 14: Shall the delinquent tax penalty be set at 4.5% of the total amount of the delinquent tax?

The Article was moved and seconded; the article passed.

ARTICLE 15: Shall the Town compensate the Collector of Delinquent Taxes by a salary, determined by the Selectboard, in lieu of compensation by the delinquent tax penalty?

The Article was moved and seconded. The Delinquent Tax Collector commented on the benefit of this article.

Tammy Leno inquired on the amount of the salary, and the Selectboard pointed out the budgeted amount.

The article was voted on and the article passed.

ARTICLE 16. Shall the Town of Calais enter into a communications union district to be known as Central Vermont Internet, under the provisions of 30 V.S.A. Chapter 82?

The article was moved by Denise Wheeler and seconded by John Brabant. John Brabant discussed the details of the communications union. Judy Copa, Ginny Sassaman, Barry Bernstein and Tammy Leno asked clarifying questions which the Selectboard discussed.

The Moderator called for a vote on the article. The article passed.

ARTICLE 17. Shall the Town of Calais appropriate \$31,448 to purchase a wood chipper contingent upon the receipt of \$10,000 in grant monies, for a total cost of \$41,448?

The article was moved by Denise Wheeler and seconded by Clif Emmons.

Donna Smyers inquired about sharing this equipment and the Selectboard discussed timing, competition for rentals, and woodchips being available to residents. Paul Hannon raised questions about the timing and length of time requirements for the chipper. Tammy Leno suggested donating wood that is in the road way. Mercedes Pinon expressed concerns regarding ongoing expenses of maintenance and storage. The Road Commissioner discussed the springtime branches in the roadway hitting the highway vehicles; the state closing of the stump dump and lack of places to put cut wood, and stated the department has space and maintenance resources; the equipment should last 20 years.

The Moderator called the question to end debate, and there was a yellow paper vote on whether to overrule the calling of the question by the moderator. The ruling was upheld, and the question was called.

The Moderator called to vote the question to end debate; it was defeated, and discussion continued.

Craig Line asked about use of surplus funds, and the Selectboard clarified. Doug Lilley raised questions on chipper training, certification and cost. The Treasurer commented about the source of funds.

Barry Bernstein moved to amend the article to appropriate the funds, subject to the availability of \$10,000 in grants, and to the maximum extent possible, be funded by town surplus funds. The motion was seconded.

Stephanie Kaplan motioned to amend the proposed amendment: The purchase of a chipper would only be approved if it comes out of a surplus fund, and taxes are not raised to pay for it. The Moderator pointed out that the amendment to the amendment takes away the discretion of the Selectboard; they would need to find the money in an existing fund.

The amendment of the amendment was seconded, voted on, and was carried.

The amendment was then voted on and carried.

Paul Hannon raised questions regarding the size of the chipper. The Road Commissioner commented that the road crew currently cut firewood size logs and leave it on the side of the road; the chipper is for rotten wood and brush.

The Selectboard considered the reasons for the size of the machine discussed.

A motion was made to call the question, which was seconded and passed. The Moderator called for a vote on this article, as amended, and the article passed with the amendment.

ARTICLE 18. To transact any other non-binding business that may legally come before the meeting.

Wilson Hughes, Calais Animal Control Officer thanked residents for registering their animals. Rose Pelchuck acknowledged first time voters at the polls, and first time Town Meeting attendees; this is her 30th consecutive Town Meeting. Larry Bush thanked Gus Seelig for his role as Moderator. Janet Pocarobba announced that she is the new Green Up Day Coordinator, along with Jamie Moorby. David Shutz announced the lunch and fundraising benefitting

the Town Hall renovation.

ARTICLE 19. Shall the voters adopt the following Calais Climate Resolution? Whereas extreme and erratic temperatures, increasingly severe storms, a rise in tick-borne diseases, and threats to farmers and maple sugarers clearly demonstrate that climate change is one of the most urgent problems facing our state, nation, and the world, and whereas the State of Vermont has a goal in the Comprehensive Energy Plan to achieve 90% of its energy from renewable sources by 2050, yet is making insufficient progress towards achieving that goal; Now, therefore, be it resolved:

1. That the Town urges the State of Vermont to:
 - a) Halt any new or expanded fossil fuel infrastructure, including but not limited to pipelines;
 - b) Firmly commit to at least 90% renewable energy for all people in Vermont, with firm interim deadlines; and,
 - c) Ensure that the transition to renewable energy is fair and equitable for all residents, with no harm to marginalized people, or rural communities.
2. That the Town will do our part to meet these demands by committing to efforts such as:
 - a) Protecting town lands from fossil fuel infrastructure, denying easements or agreements for any pipelines crossing town lands;
 - b) Weatherizing town buildings and schools;
 - c) Enlisting state support to install solar for town and school buildings;
 - d) Other initiatives to improve residents' quality of life while helping us reduce overall energy use.

The Article was moved by Ginny Sassaman. Ginny Sassaman commented regarding climate change and the bi-partisan nature of the resolution and the state of energy usage within Vermont. Barry Bernstein commented on his support of energy efficiency and his concerns with moving toward solar panels on Town buildings, trading one renewable energy for another. Larry Bush commented on his experiences with energy saving technologies.

Fletcher Dean motioned to amend the article to add the words "if appropriate" to item 2C; the motion was seconded and passed.

Tammy Leno added to the discussion on moving away from fossil fuels. John Rosenblum commented on the process of generating solar energy and selling it back to WEC.

The moderator called for a vote on Article 19 as amended. The article, as amended, passed.

The following Articles will be voted by Australian Ballot:

ARTICLE 20. To elect the following Town officers by Australian ballot:

Selectboard Member	3-year term
Selectboard Member	2-year term
Selectboard Member	2-year term
Elementary School Director	3-year term
Elementary School Director	2-year term
Union 32 Middle & High School Director	3-year term
Lister	3-year term

The meeting adjourned at 12:57 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Katie Lane-Karnas, Recording Secretary

Approved by the Selectboard at the 3/26/18 meeting